(b) whether Government have taken it in a lighter prospective; and

(c) if so, the details thereof;

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA) : (a) Government is aware of the comments attributed to President Clinton on the situation in South Asia, including his description of the region as the most dangerous place in the world.

(b) and (c) No, Sir. India has demonstrated its resolve and capacity to safeguard its interests in a restrained and responsible manner. There is now a better appreciation by the United States of India's restraint in dealing with persistent provocation from Pakistan. Government has also conveyed to the international community, including the United States, that it must direct its concerns on tensions in South Asia to persuading Pakistan to abjure violence, terrorism and hostile propaganda against India and respect the bilateral agreements it has solemnly entered into. Government is committed to resolving all problems with our neighbours through peaceful bilateral dialogue.

India's Global Image

2948. SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDRA REDDY : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether India's image has improved globally after Clinton's visit;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps taken to counter Pakistan's anti-India stand ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PAJNA): (a) and (b) A visit by a US President to India was an important international event. There was, therefore, considerable international interest in the visit. President Clinton's visit to India provided the US and the international community the opportunity to see India's diversity, the strength of its democratic institutions, its economic and technological dynamism, its social and political progress as well as the wide-ranging opportunities that exist for mutually beneficial co-operation.

(c) Government uses every bilateral and multilateral opportunity to apprise the international community of Pakistan's support and sponsorship of cross-border terrorism and its hostile propaganda against India. Government has also initiated co-operation with a number of countries on measures to combat terrorism. A Joint Working Group on Counter-terrorism has been set up with the United States to intensify co-operation in this area.